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ABSTRACT

This background paper seeks to clarify the concept of transition for students with severe disabilities and to describe New Hampshire's response to the federal school-to-work initiatives. A conceptual framework is presented for linking educational outcomes more closely with improved adult life expectations. The framework seeks to encourage local education agencies to review their traditional curricula and develop transition programs which provide greater real-world opportunities for students with severe disabilities. Following a discussion of the historical development of transition, various transition models are described. Current practices and problems in transition programming are outlined, focusing on four key issues: curriculum, coordination, teacher preparation, and employment options. Ten policy recommendations are offered for promoting a statewide transition initiative. A separate executive summary of the paper is attached, under the title "Preparing for Transition: Helping Young People with Severe Disabilities to Prepare for Life." The executive summary provides background information and an identification of the problem, lists important ingredients of successful transition programs, and asks 15 questions to evaluate the effectiveness of secondary educational programs. (The document includes over 70 references.) (JDD)

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Making a New Start:

◆ Redefining the Role of the School

◆ in Helping People with Severe Disabilities

◆ To Prepare for Life

EC 230864

OFFICE FOR TRAINING AND EDUCATIONAL INNOVATIONS

◆ A Project of the New Hampshire Developmental Disabilities Council and the New Hampshire Special Education Bureau

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MAKING A NEW START: REDEFINING THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN HELPING STUDENTS WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES TO PREPARE FOR LIFE

Introduction

The process by which students with severe disabilities move from school programs to productive adult lives in their communities is undergoing intense scrutiny. For all young people, education and training serve as the stepping stones to becoming valued, contributing adults in society. However, historically, most students with severe disabilities have faced the unrewarding prospects of unemployment and long-term public dependency after their school programs end. The economic opportunity structure has been so out of reach for this group that their families, their communities, and the students themselves have traditionally expected very little.

Recent federal initiatives have ignited greater interest in increasing program effectiveness for these students. Issues associated with the transition from school to the real world of work, along with the schools' responsibilities to prepare students for it, are being examined in educational communities across the United States. New Hampshire has been an active participant in this educational re-evaluation, standing in the forefront of the national "transition movement" as one of the first demonstration states to re-examine the priorities for citizens with developmental disabilities.

In this background paper, the New Hampshire Special Education Bureau seeks to clarify the concept of transition and to describe New Hampshire's response to the federal school to work initiatives. The New Hampshire Department of Education seeks to link educational outcomes more closely with improved adult life expectations for students with severe disabilities, thus reversing traditionally ineffective educational approaches for students labeled developmentally disabled, mentally retarded, deaf-blind, and multiply handicapped, through the promotion of a major policy initiative within the Department.

In presenting this underlying conceptual framework, the Special Education Bureau hopes to encourage local education agencies to review their traditional curricula for students with severe disabilities, and to develop transition programs which provide greater real-world opportunities for students with severe disabilities.

Historical Development of Transition

Since the 1940's, communities, schools, and the federal government have demonstrated increasing concern for the problems of youth employment and transition from school to work. In the early 1940's, the Vocational Rehabilitation Act, which was designed to assist people with handicaps to maintain their employment, was expanded to include mental retardation as a "qualifying" disability for job training services. This action helped promote the development of sheltered workshops as a primary approach to the unemployed status of people labeled retarded. The high school special education "work-study" movement began in the late 1940's and became a major strategy to prepare students with mild handicaps for the world of work (Brolin, 1976; Clark, 1976). This program model focused on moving youth from in-school, "practice" work sites to job placements in the community (Miller, Ewing, & Phelps, 1980).

During the 1960's and 1970's, most states enacted legislation mandating that schools provide appropriate special education services to all school-age youth with disabilities. In 1975, the "Education for All Handicapped Children Act" (P.L. 94-142) assured that children, aged 3-21, with handicaps would receive a free and appropriate education. The Vocational Education Act of 1963, and its subsequent amendments in 1968 and 1976, sought to increase the participation of young adults with handicaps in vocational programs through funding "set-asides".

The 1970's and 1980's have seen the continuation of federal programs to assist in solving the educational and employment problems of youth and adults with specific economic, social, cultural, or educational difficulties. The job training and employment programs initiated under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), and presently continued under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), focus on the training needs of individuals with special needs. Additionally, Congress enacted the Targeted Jobs Tax Credit program, to provide tax incentives for employers who hire individuals referred through state vocational rehabilitation programs, as well as other adult service agencies. The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984 extended Vocational Education efforts and mandated the delivery of assessment, support services, counseling, and transitional services for students who have been identified as handicapped and disadvantaged (Rusch & Phelps, 1987).

Despite these many efforts, the achievement of productive roles in the labor force for young adults with disabilities has not been realized. Policymakers and professionals from the delivery systems designed to serve these young people have not to date developed programs that are generally effective in accomplishing this key goal.

Youth Unemployment and Adult Outcomes

As rapid changes occur in the workplace, and as the demographics of the youth population shift, the undesirable outcomes associated with youth unemployment have increased significantly. Studies suggest that most young adults do not have substantial employment difficulties. For a minority of young people, however, long periods without work contribute to severe and prolonged problems both for these individuals and for the community and the general public (Freeman & Wise, 1982).

A poor early employment history can lead to long-term public dependency, and increase the difficulty of functioning independently in the community. Since society places such a high value on work, the individual who is unemployed and thus viewed as a "tax taker" is also considered less acceptable in social situations (Kiernan & Stark, 1986).

One group which remains seriously unemployed or underemployed (Halpern, 1985; Kiernan & Stark, 1986.) are people with severe disabilities. In 1983, the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights reported that between 50% and 80% of all persons with disabilities were unemployed. Approximately 67% of all individuals with handicaps between the ages of 16 and 64 were not working. Of those who were, approximately 75% were employed only part-time (Rusch & Phelps, 1986). Studies following individuals with differing handicapping conditions and levels of severity, conducted in Vermont (Hasazi, Gordon, & Roe, 1985), Virginia (Wehman, Kregel, & Zoller, 1984), Washington (Edgar et al., 1986), Pennsylvania (Zollers, Conroy, Hess, & Newman, 1984), and Colorado (Mithaug & Horiuchi, 1983) reflect similar and, in many instances, even lower employment rates. Wehman and his colleagues (1984) found that less than 12% of all severely disabled individuals were employed in Virginia, and that all of the 117 individuals in a statewide sample were underemployed. These findings suggest that meaningful employment outcomes for graduating students who have disabilities are not being realized (Rusch, 1986).

It would appear that rehabilitation agencies and high schools, the primary vehicles for vocational

services to young adults with handicaps, have been ineffective in preparing these students for competitive employment. Most young people and adults with severe disabilities still have little access to opportunities for real employment in community businesses and industries (Renzaglia, 1986; Revell, Wehman, & Arnold, 1985; Rusch, 1986).

Evidence from continuing studies and demonstrations confirm that several million individuals with disabilities in this country, who are currently not given the opportunity to engage in meaningful employment, possess the potential to live and work successfully in the community, if provided the appropriate education, job training, and support (Rusch, 1986). Most of those individuals who are labeled mentally retarded, multiply disabled, or otherwise considered severely disabled have not yet successfully made the transition to the community. Most work in sheltered settings, are unemployed or underemployed, and have little hope of participating in their community in the manner in which most nondisabled persons participate.

Special Federal and State Initiatives

On September 24, 1986, New Hampshire Governor John Sununu established The Governor's Task Force on Disability and Employment. Created through Executive Order Number 86-9, this Task Force was empowered to undertake joint state agency planning for the purpose of reducing unnecessary dependency by persons with severe disabilities on publicly funded programs. In defining the purpose of the Task Force, the Governor stated, "...persons with severe disabilities need and deserve the opportunity to be independent, integrated and productive society members."

Governor Sununu's actions occured within the context of a wide range of new federal initiatives. In the 1983 and 1986 Amendments to the Education of the Handicapped Act (P.L. 98-199 and P.L. 99-457), Congress sought to address the major educational and employment difficulties encountered by young adults with disabilities. Section 626 of P.L. 98-199 (and its refinement in P.L. 99-457), entitled "Secondary Education and Transitional Services for Handicapped Youth", authorized the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) to appropriate $6.6 million annually in grants and contracts intended to strengthen and coordinate education, training, and related services, thereby assisting youth in the process of transition to post-secondary education, competitive employment, or services (Rusch & Phelps, 1986).

Major objectives of the federal effort are (1) to stimulate the improvement of programs in secondary special education; and (2) to strengthen and coordinate education, training, and related services to assist in the transition process to post-secondary education, vocational training, competitive employment, continuing education, or adult services.

Leadership in launching the national transition initiative was provided by Madeleine C. Will, the Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. In her paper, "Bridges from School to Working Life" (Will, 1984), she listed the key ingredients of successful transition programs. These include: (1) creating effective high school programs that prepare students to work and live in the community; (2) establishing workable relationships with a broad range of adult service programs that can meet the multifaceted needs of individuals with handicaps in employment and community settings; and (3) developing cooperative transition planning between educational and community service agencies in order to design and implement comprehensive services for young adults leaving school (Hardman & McDonnell, 1987; Will, 1984).

To promote these objectives, OSERS has funded a variety of programs designed to accelerate the development of demonstration models at the state level, cooperative models to plan and develop transition services at the local level, and demonstrations in post-secondary education (Rusch & Phelps, 1986). New amendments to PL 94-142 require that vocational education at the secondary level has an emphasis on

education and vocational training of students with handicaps. The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984 (P.L. 98-524) expands and extends a number of initiatives relating to students with disabilities that have evolved through the past two decades. The Perkins Act requires that each student identified as disabled in a vocational program must receive (1) an assessment; (2) special services to meet the unique needs of each individual; (3) guidance, counseling, and career development activities; and (4) counseling services designed to facilitate transition from school to post-school employment and career opportunities (Cobb, 1986; P.L. 98-524, Oct. 19, 1984).

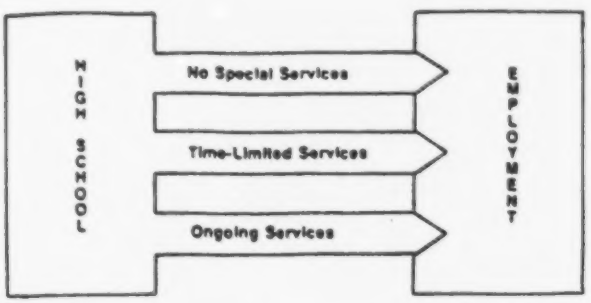
Transition Models

The responsibility for improving the preparation of youth with severe handicaps for employment rests primarily with school systems. The federal government has called upon the schools to "...renew their efforts to develop cooperative programs between vocational education, special education, and vocational rehabilitation" (Eighth Annual Report to Congress, 1986). There is a further expectation that a comprehensive array of coordinated services from other community agencies that serve adults is required to ensure successful transition planning. It is widely understood that "transition" is a process, not a service or a product. In the three conceptual models which follow, a better way to manage the process of transition is recognized as the key to success.

The OSERS Model

The OSERS model is acknowledged as the foundation of the U.S. Department of Education's national initiative, introducing the school to work transition process in 1984 (Will, 1984). This approach to transition presents three service options: (1) no special support services or generic school services; (2) time-limited services; and (3) ongoing and continuing service requirements, depending on individual needs.

OSERS Transition Model



The conceptualization of transitions as "bridges" is particularly apt, in view of the strength of the connections that often need to be made:

> Like a bridge, transition is only as strong as the foundation on either side (the quality of school preparation on one side and the quality of adult service

> opportunities on the other) and the construction of the span itself (the planning process). If any of these components are inadequate, the chance of student success in the community is greatly reduced. (p.2) (McDonnell, Wilcox, & Boles, 1983).

The OSERS model characterizes the high school special education program as "the primary foundation from which transition services should emanate" (Halpern, 1985). Consistent with this model, special education is viewed as progressive when it is providing "integrated" services responsive to "employment-related" needs.

The first bridge, labeled "transition without special services," refers to the use of "generic" services, which are services generally available to anyone in the community (Halpern, 1985). Individuals able to negotiate this pathway do not require specialized support services in order to obtain or maintain employment. Community colleges and vocational-technical institutions are examples of generic services by which one gains meaningful employment. Other examples include employment procurement as a result of secondary school work-study opportunities, family contacts (Eighth Annual Report to Congress, 1986), or private sector recruitment efforts.

The second bridge, identified as "transition with time-limited services," cites vocational rehabilitation as a viable example. However, by their own admission, state vocational rehabilitation agencies serve only a small fraction of the eligible persons between the ages of 16 and 24 (Schalock, 1986). The implication here is that there is a serious gap in services for many young adults who find it difficult to connect with work or further education. Additionally, rehabilitation agencies appear to suffer from persistent financial shortages and lack of know-how in serving the needs of young adults (Rusch, Mithaug, & Flexer, 1986).

The third bridge has been labeled "transition with ongoing services". The "supported employment" models of competitive employment are examples of this type of ongoing service since they are characterized by long-term follow-up training (Lagomarcino, 1986). However, Halpern (1985) points out that this bridge does not at present represent a widely existing service delivery system with a specific goal for the transition process.

There are complications to this model's practical application at the local level. The general impression is that schools would prefer to embrace a more academic, "general education" approach for students with severe disabilities, in contrast to the real need to develop functional skills. Increasing evidence that this approach leaves students inadequately prepared for life is still often ignored, as schools continue to be reluctant to extend their control and purse strings beyond traditional building and grade-level boundaries. What has become increasingly apparent is that some other group, (e.g., a task force representing various agencies or an interested third party) usually has to assume the responsibility for initiating a shift toward transition planning, and for motivating the schools to provide supplemental assistance for job training, placement, and the connections with long term support available from the systems that serve adults with disabilities in the community.

More complications arise from the fact that most vocational programs are not available to or appropriate for students with severe disabilities. Thus, vocational planning for post-school employment almost always begins too late (if ever) in the educational career of a student with a disability (Wehman, 1983).

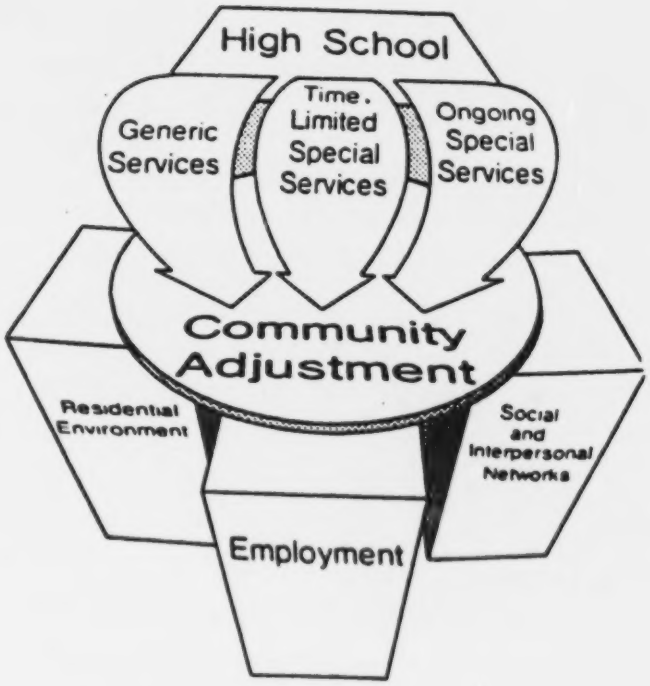
The Halpern Model

Andrew S. Halpern expands the OSERS model by adding two dimensions critical to living successfully in one's community. Halpern's view results from his research at the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center in Mental Retardation at the University of Oregon. He suggests that transition should lead more directly to **full** participation in community life, adding two important dimensions to the employment

outcome. The quality of a person's residential environment and the development of social and interpersonal networks are of equal importance.

> I suspect that most people would not argue about the importance of these three dimensions of community adjustment. The OSERS position, however, suggests that success in employment is likely to be accompanied by success in other areas. (Will, 1984) Unfortunately, we have at least some evidence to the contrary. (Halpern, 1985, p.481)

Halpern's Revised Transition Model



In the first pillar, employment, there are no differences with the OSERS policy. Halpern endorses the OSERS position that there are many diverse, complex issues which must be addressed to achieve successful transition to employment.

Achievement of a quality living environment must address equally complex issues, including opportunities for recreation with non-disabled people; neighborhood participation; availability of services in reasonable proximity to the home; and other general qualities associated with satisfactory living, such as safety, security, and the aesthetics of the surroundings.

The "social and interpersonal networks" pillar is considered to be the most important:

> It includes major dimensions of human relationships such as daily communication, self-esteem, family support, emotional maturity friendship, and intimate relationships. (Halpern, 1985, p.481)

Halpern found surprisingly few relationships among the variables relating to employment, residential environment, and social/interpersonal networks. He concluded that successful interventions in one area (e.g., employment) would not necessarily produce improvement along the other dimensions..."if any of the three pillars are inadequate and do not carry their own weight, then the entire structure is in danger of collapse, and a person's ability to live in the community is threatened" (p. 481).

From the Oregon research, Halpern and his colleagues identified four key areas which should be carefully analyzed in building a comprehensive high school program for students with severe disabilities: (1) general curriculum; (2) vocational education opportunities; (3) programming for transition; and (4) characteristics of secondary special education teachers. After studying these areas in secondary special education programs, the following broad goals were recommended to the Oregon Department of Education:

1. Identify and disseminate appropriate curriculum materials that can be used by both special and regular education teachers.

2. Enhance career education through more effective collaboration between special education and vocational education.

3. Establish interagency agreements that will facilitate transition.

4. Develop inservice training for administrators, teachers, and parents.

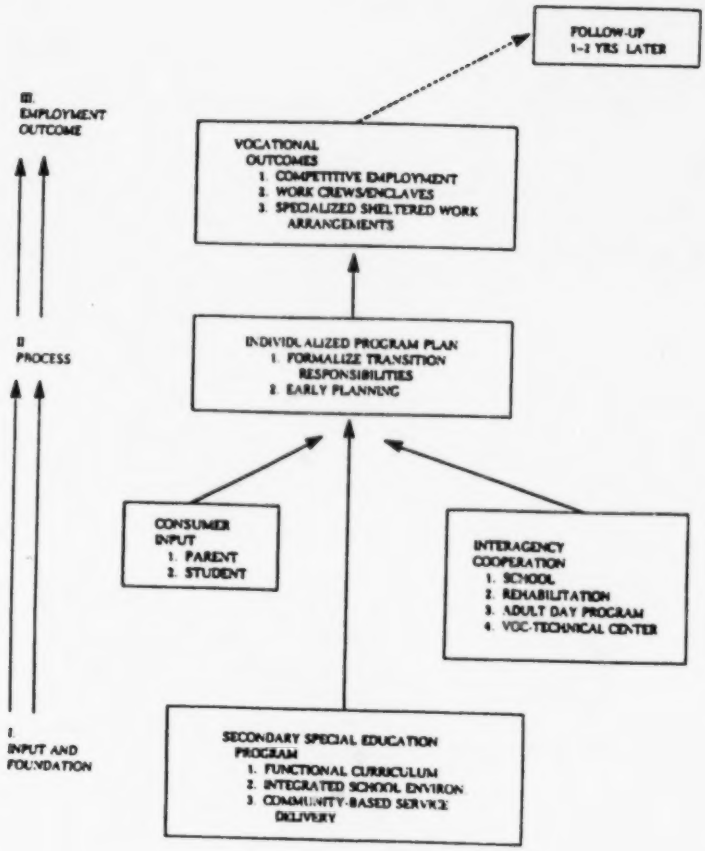
5. Require a career education component within the IEP.

6. Change (teacher) certification requirements (now K-12) to separate elementary and secondary endorsements. (Halpern, 1985)

The Wehman Model

The third model is more procedural in its design. Paul Wehman and his colleagues at Virginia Commonwealth University (Wehman, Kregel, & Barcus, 1985) describe a three stage transition model: (1) school instruction; (2) planning for the transition process; and (3) placement into meaningful employment. Like others, Wehman emphasizes the importance of addressing the quality of the services offered by schools and the range of community-based vocational alternatives, as well as the transition planning process.

Three-Stage Vocational Transition Model



Within the component of school instruction, Wehman and colleagues identified three critical program characteristics that contribute to successful school to work transition: (1) a functional curriculum reflecting skills required in the local labor market and behaviors important to community functioning, useful for the student, and consistent with expectations of nonhandicapped peers; (2) integrated school and work settings to expose students to the community and work expectations and to expose future employers and co-workers to students' potential as reliable employees; and (3) community-based instruction providing the student with opportunities to practice targeted skills in natural job environments, such as hospitals, offices, and restaurants.

In addition to critical school characteristics, Wehman describes three components of the transition planning process: (1) a formal individualized transition plan; (2) consumer input; and (3) interagency cooperation. A formal individualized transition plan is a structured mechanism which ensures that recommendations for employment occur. It specifies the competencies to be acquired by the student; the transition services to be received before and after graduation or termination of services; annual goals and short-term objectives reflecting skills required for functioning on the job, at home, and in the community; and the individuals responsible for initiating and following through on each activity. The transition plan is intended to be longitudinal in nature, developed four years prior to graduation and modified annually until successful post-school adjustments have been attained. The transition plan can be a section of the Individual Education Plan (IEP), or it can be a component of a Vocational Rehabilitation Individual Written Rehabilitation Plan (IWRP) or a Developmental Services Individual Service Plan (ISP), if the student is eligible for those adult service systems.

An essential feature of this model is its emphasis on the informed participation of "consumers", i.e., parents and guardians. This is promoted through education programs which orient parents/guardians to community agencies providing post-school services, familiarize them with specific responsibilities and application procedures of various agencies, and prepare them to work with agencies and the school in developing transition plans.

The key to the successful delivery of support services is interagency cooperation. Cooperation should involve (1) information exchanges between the participating agencies to identify varying legislative mandates, services to be provided, eligibility requirements, and individualized planning procedures; (2) related staff development activities; and (3) restructuring of services to eliminate duplication of effort and assure joint planning by appropriate agencies.

One of the key goals of all transition planning is employment. Employment options include: (1) competitive employment without supports; (2) competitive employment with supports (e.g., use of an ongoing job site coordinator for one-to-one training and follow-up) for individuals who need more help in obtaining and maintaining a job; (3) enclaves in industry, consisting of small groups of individuals under the daily supervision of a trained human services staff person, for people requiring a high level of support; and (4) specialized industrial training, involving use of behavior modification to train workers to perform in small industry-oriented workshop settings, for those capable of productivity, but who require a concentrated, individualized amount of support to achieve productivity.

Current Practices and Problems in Transition Programming

A high level of national interest has emerged regarding the quality of education and related services for students with severe disabilities who are "aging out" of their school programs. Educational objectives for young people with severe disabilities need not be different from those of their nonhandicapped peers. These students must also be prepared for participation in the adult world as productive, contributing citizens. The real difference lies in the design of their educational programs. For this group of students, programs must lead more directly to opportunities for real employment and integrated community living after they leave high school.

Current calls for "excellence" in education have largely overlooked the outcomes of special education at the secondary school level, as well as the diverse educational needs of students identified as handicapped. The ideals of equal educational opportunity may have been at the foundation of historic special education legislation, but a great number of secondary-aged youth who have disabilities have not yet attained parity with their peers (The National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1985).

Although there are now dozens of exemplary national research and demonstration projects that address transition concerns for individuals with severe handicaps, there appear to be only isolated examples of successful transition programming and services in New Hampshire's schools and local communities. According to the Subcommittee of the New Hampshire State Advisory Committee on P.L. 94-142:

> The subject of transition has become an issue because the majority of programs in public schools have failed to prepare handicapped students for entry into the adult community upon their completion of their educational program. (p. 1, Nov. 10, 1986)

The Eighth Annual Report to Congress asserts that "to move successfully into adult life, these students will need to have acquired the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and independent living. Students with more severe disabilities will also need to have developed relationships with a range of adult service providers" (p.23). Presumably, along with an appropriate education, additional intervention is needed in the form of adult services that will support transition for students with disabilities. However, as the Eighth Annual Report (1986) points out, "The complexity and diversity of transitional needs and the wide range of service providers can make the coordination and delivery of transitional services difficult" (p.23).

Shortages in community vocational and residential service programs are the greatest impediment faced by individuals with severe disabilities, and those community services that do exist are only marginally effective in accomplishing their intended outcomes (McDonnell, Wilcox, & Boles, 1986). As follow-up studies have documented, workers with disabilities who have secured employment have done so through a friend or family connection, by and large, not through organized job placement services (Hasazi et al., 1986; Wehman, Kregel, & Seyforth, 1985).

Madeleine Will has pointed out that transition is often made more difficult by the limitations imposed by public and professional perceptions of an individual's disability. Low expectations held by school personnel, parents, service professionals, and the general public may constitute a barrier as formidable as shortages in appropriate school and community services. Writing on the needs of children with substantial handicaps, Bliton and Schroeder (1986) argue that:

> If individuals with moderate and severe handicaps are to live, work, and spend leisure time in their communities, we educators must examine our attitudes, clarify our values, and rethink our roles. Examining one's own attitude is a very difficult process. What we would like to feel and what we truly feel become inextricably inter-twined. Our behavior and words are indica-tors of our true attitudes. Words like "deficient, remediation, inca-pable" are clues to our feelings. (pp.20-21)

Four Key Issues

The remainder of this paper covers key issues that the special education profession and affiliated agencies must take seriously to overcome the difficulties preventing successful transitions of young adults from school to work. These issues are grouped into four areas: curriculum, collaboration/coordination, teacher preparation, and employment options.

Curriculum. The educational system which a community chooses, through its curriculum, reveals a great deal about the kind of expectations it has for itself. Clear understandings about why it educates its

citizens, whom among its citizens it chooses to educate, and what the consequences of those decisions are for the larger society must be carefully weighed in state and local curriculum decisions.

It is questionable whether current curricula at the high school level prepares students with disabilities to meet academic criteria for finishing school. However, there is no question that it fails to include activities directly related to employment or adult functioning after leaving school (Wilcox & Bellamy, 1982).

> Despite the promise and progress of the last decade, thousands of adolescents and young adults with disabilities are trapped by the conventional wisdom of curriculum design in special education and human services. They are confined, not by physical barriers, but by widely shared assumptions about what they should learn and the order in which it should be presented. In effect, individuals with moderate and severe disabilities are trapped by a "readiness" logic. (Wilcox, 1987, p.1)

Lou Brown and his colleagues at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (Brown, Pumpian, Baumgart, VanDeventer, Ford, Nisbet, Schroeder, & Gruenewald, 1981), in attempting to formulate a new approach to special education curricula in the late 1970's, asked the key question, "Are the students being systematically prepared to function as independently and productively as possible in the most varied and constructive nonschool and postschool environments?" Their studies indicated that, by and large, they were not. In most cases they found that curricula offered through age 21 were designed to teach students with disabilities to function as nondisabled children under the age of five. Among other things, they found that most students were receiving their education only in segregated environments, devoid of opportunities to interact with their nonhandicapped peers. Because so little has changed since these studies were conducted, these same conclusions can still be drawn with regard to the type of curricula and environmental settings currently being offered in most high school programs in the country. Indeed, the limited survey research that is available suggests that public school preparation for work is generally quite limited and often totally non-existent for individuals with severe disabilities (Vogelsberg, 1986).

While there may be considerable agreement about the intent of most curricula, there is ample reason to question the content of a specific curriculum that supposedly contributes to adult success. The need to re-evaluate the curriculum and its ability to fully respond to the goal of preparing students with severe handicaps for the world of work and community participation should be given a high priority. "Most school-based vocational programs (part-time or full-time) do not heavily emphasize employment or job placement as a culmination of vocational training experiences. It is usually expected that adult programs will take up this responsibility" (Wehman, 1983, p. 220).

Traditional models of vocational programming tend to favor those students with the most advanced skills and most normal functioning. Curricula and general staffing patterns that would allow for flexible community training opportunities as a part of regular school programs have not been widely accepted, or funded. Only recently have transition programs, primarily underwritten by federal dollars, initiated a number of public school models that are developing the process for identifying community-referenced training, community-based training, and the transition from public school service delivery to adult service delivery and/or employment (Vogelsberg, 1986).

The reason for the push toward community-based training in actual job settings is to circumvent the difficulty many students with severe disabilities encounter in transferring classroom learning to the natural environments in which people are expected to perform. Additionally, this relatively new effort has redirected the emphasis from developmentally-based curricula to "domain-based" curricula which attempt to avoid "readiness traps" for persons with moderate and severe disabilities (Wilcox, 1987, p. 7).

Collaboration/Coordination. There is a growing consensus that collaborative efforts by educators, parents, and community service agencies bring about the best preparation for an independent and employment-oriented life (Halloran, Thomas, Snauwaert, & DeStefano, 1987). The need for systematically planned procedures to enable young adults with severe disabilities to make the transition from school to meaningful employment and community integration is well documented in the literature (Everson & Moon, 1987). Cooperative planning and resource sharing between public and private groups, such as state Departments of Education, Mental Health, and Labor, and the private business sector, maximize employment opportunities for individuals with significant impairments. The key to making such programs work, according to the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (1986), is coordination.

> Signing interagency agreements alone at any level is not the answer. There are different ways to make agreements work, and a management structure is needed especially for local interagency coordination, together with funding and resources and encouragement to collaborate, and sanctions to make the agree-ments stick. Administrative planning and a commitment to support interagency agreements are needed at the State level. (p. 16)

Increasingly, individuals with disabilities, their parents, and many educators are asking unsettling questions regarding the ultimate aim of education and training. "Individuals who have grown accustomed to legally mandated educational services," according to McCarthy and colleagues (1985), "are often shocked to learn that adult services provided by vocational rehabilitation or community mental health agencies are not automatically given to the citizen with disabilities. Employment, which is often an assumed outcome of public education, is not a reality for an estimated 50-75% of all adults with disabilities" (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1983, p. 21). These inquiries are uncovering the fact that policies and procedures which successfully address issues of transition and the prerequisite elements of coordination are in short supply.

Since the basic goal underlying transition is the creation of smooth pathways to community life, interruption of needed services and/or the possibilities of regressive post-school experiences must be avoided through advanced, comprehensive planning at the secondary level. While resulting in more constructive student programs, this degree of attention to individuals can also help to bring about needed changes in the systems serving people with disabilities at the age of transition.

Reallocation of funds from inappropriate nonvocational services to programs which provide paid work opportunities and independent living skills (Will, 1986) is another important collaboration element. Implicit in this is resource pooling between departments and agencies and a potential redefinition of traditional roles and responsibilities, particularly between schools and adult agencies.

> We need to look much more closely at how many professionals such as rehabilitation counselors and vocational educators currently function in the transition process. It may well be that many of these individuals will need to dramatically alter their current job roles and play a more active part in job placement activity. It is questionable whether the high level of unemployment which currently exists will be reduced until this happens. (Wehman et al., 1985, p. 221)

A growing body of literature is focusing on the need to provide formal and longitudinal transition-specific services during the school years in order to achieve transition to post-school adult services for individuals with severe disabilities (Brown et al., 1981; Wehman, Kregel, & Barcus, 1985; Wilcox & Bellamy, 1982). The careful planning and coordination that is implied in all the definitions of transition should be developed and implemented at least three to five years before the end of high school.

Special educators are legally charged with providing educational services for young adults with disabilities through the early school years. These professionals are the most likely to assume responsibility for planning the necessary interagency transition procedures. "Preparation of students with disabilities for transition," according to Everson & Moon (1987), "assumes that the goal of secondary special education is to identify future environments which graduates are likely to access and to provide training in skills needed in these environments."

Besides the roles and responsibilities determined by the school and agency personnel, it must be recognized that the ultimate advocate and decision-maker in the process will be the parent or guardian. Wilcox (1987) argues that "part of the responsibility of high school...is to make sure parents have high expectations for where their sons and daughters will live after they leave school, and that they understand the mechanics of post-school services (p.2)". The degree to which schools have taken the initiative to educate parents is subject for lively debate. What is certain is that parents remain underutilized and, often times, systematically devalued.

"Parents are the natural 'case managers' for their sons and daughters," according to Wilcox, "and unless they have been educated, parents may be satisfied with work and residential services which are unnecessarily restrictive or do not represent best practices (p.2)." A parent who is adequately informed about employment and training alternatives in the community will be able to actively participate in planning for the transition of their young adult (Goodall & Bruder, 1985).

Recent surveys indicate that upon graduation from or leaving school, individuals with severe disabilities are often unemployed or underemployed; do not participate in community activities; and frequently do not receive appropriate post-school training or support services (Hasazi, et al 1985). Although there has been sizeable growth in the number of vocational training programs preparing students with disabilities for meaningful employment, "the majority of vocational programs continue to train and place persons with handicaps in sheltered, segregated settings where remuneration is minimal, if at all" (Renzaglia, 1986). If students with handicaps are to benefit from new technology and also participate in competitive (supported) employment, it is essential that educators and other professionals be skilled in both advocating for integrated community opportunities and providing the skill training necessary to gain access to those opportunities. Unfortunately, those individuals "currently serving persons with handicaps continue to have low expectations and, consequently, fail to provide the opportunities for meaningful, nonsheltered employment" (Renzaglia, 1986, pp.303-304).

Teacher Preparation. Bliton & Schroeder (1986) predict that, in the future, public schools "will be held accountable for providing a functional education for substantially handicapped students, and teacher training will be geared more toward teaching and managing individualized functional skill development" (p. 14). This, according to Halloran et al. (1987), "will not happen without considerable effort. Preservice and inservice training must be made widely available to both public school and adult service agency personnel and to the community at large. Personnel preparation programs at the university level should reflect the best that the field of special education, vocational education, rehabilitation, and recreation have to offer." Unfortunately, "special vocational curricula...are underrepresented in university and other training programs... Universities are lagging behind in preparing professionals for adult service staff roles. Historically, programs training personnel who staff adult and vocational progams have represented one discipline, such as special education, to the exclusion of vocational education or vocational rehabilitation" (Rusch, Mithaug, & Flexer, 1986, p. 11).

"Comprehensive transition planning currently is being explored in nearly every state across the country," according to Everson & Moon (1987). "Concerns have arisen from educators, adult service providers, and parents regarding their roles and responsibilities in the planning and implementation of the

transition process." Changes in educational philosophy and service delivery procedures require teachers to accept new and creative roles in their local community. In a number of states across the country, including sites in New Hampshire, special educators have extended their role of vocational preparation to include job development and placement for students in their final years of school (Wehman et al., 1987).

Elder (1984) has noted that more than 60% of all special education students in this country are transition-aged, between 15 and 21 years old. By sheer numbers, this index of growth indicates a burgeoning demand for specially trained secondary special education teachers. Secondary special education programs are now serving more students and a more diverse population of students than during any previous time as a result of legal and legislative mandates, parental involvement and activism, and improved technology (Weisenstein, 1986).

Special education and vocational education leaders must reflect on their respective teacher preparation programs. Few college level programs have reconceptualized and updated their teacher training course offerings to reflect the new knowledge gained from improved training and behavioral technology and the changes in federal legislation in the 1980's. What has emerged from several new training projects sponsored by the Office of Special Education/Division of Personnel Preparation (OSE/DPP), has been a clearer delineation of the roles and responsibilities of secondary special educators, vocational educators, vocational rehabilitators, case managers, and others directly, and indirectly, involved in the transition planning process (Everson & Moon, 1987).

Current obstacles to service delivery and narrow programmatic goals will remain until teacher preparation programs "incorporate best practices in training endeavors, providing a broadened perspective of the full support network available...Future personnel preparation efforts must focus on training integrators of service; that is, effective professionals cannot confine themselves to their own instructional program role, agency, and discipline" (Rusch, Mithaug, & Flexer, 1986, p. 11).

If a smooth transition from school to work is to be realized, both preservice and inservice needs must be addressed by teacher training programs at the university level and by the State Departments of Education, Mental Health and Labor. Considering the varying types and degrees of disabilities to be served by the schools and adult services, both educators and human service personnel must possess a wide range of skills and resources. Interagency cooperation is imperative to make this a reality. Professionals from all cooperating agencies must be encouraged to receive training in the newer technologies and approaches, if the needs of those with the most severe disabilities are to be met.

Employment Options. The Eighth Annual Report to Congress (1986) states that:

> Approximately 100,000 disabled adults use Developmental Disability adult day services. It is estimated that 40,000 are excluded from an opportunity to earn wages while the remaining 60,000 disabled adults earn an average of $1.00 per day or $288 per year. For the severely disabled or multiply handicapped adult, coordination of the services available from community mental health agencies, vocational rehabilitation, family services, medical professionals, vocational education, advocacy groups, and other service providers is vital if these individuals are to be productive wage earning workers. (p. 31)

Recent research indicates that individuals with severe disabilities can work in community integrated settings, if they are provided with appropriate long-term support (Kiernan & Stark, 1986; Rusch, 1986). Traditionally, post-school adult services for young adults with severe disabilities have been designed to be

non-vocational in nature. These services either provide lifelong custodial care, or provide "readiness" for later vocational training. In contrast, the newer supported employment services require the establishment of local programs which provide specific work opportunities for individuals with severe disabilities. To be successful, these services need to be provided in a flexible but comprehensive, individualized fashion to meet the complex needs of the people seeking employment support.

By definition, supported employment is (1) for persons who have severe disabilities, and who, because of their disabilities, need intensive, ongoing support to perform in a work setting; (2) conducted in a variety of work settings, particularly work sites that are integrated with persons without disabilities; and (3) supported by whatever activity is necessary to sustain paid work by persons with disabilities (Eighth Annual Report to Congress, 1986). Support activities include (but are not limited to) supervision, training, transportation, attendant care, adaptive support, and parental/residential counseling (Vogelsberg, 1986).

Mank, Rhodes, and Bellamy (1986) describe four supported employment models, each developed by the University of Oregon's Specialized Training Program for replication in integrated community settings. Supported employment, as illustrated in each of the models, is based on the premise that successful job training occurs on the job, where the job and/or environment is adapted to the needs and abilities of the worker. Consequently, individuals in any form of supported employment can immediately begin earning money and reduce their dependence on public services.

Supported Jobs Model The Supported Jobs Model adapts competitive on-the-job training approaches by adding necessary provisions for ongoing support. Generally, a not-for-profit community agency is established to place individuals in regular community jobs. The work opportunities come principally from service businesses - restaurants, offices, and hotels. However, the model could provide support in many other work situations. Generally, positions are sought that neither have time constraints nor require employees to work at high speed. Program staff typically negotiate for positions of 4-8 hours of daily work, with the expectation that workers need not function at average productivity levels of non-disabled employees to perform the job successfully (Mank, Rhodes, & Bellamy, 1986).

Mobile Crew Model The Mobile Crew Model is designed "as a small, single-purpose business" (Mank, Rhodes, & Bellamy, 1986, p. 145). Mobile crews typically secure service contracts for jobs such as building or grounds maintenance, and typically work from a van rather than being facility-based. Crews usually employ three to five individuals along with a supervisor who provides support and training. Care must be exercised to insure that opportunities to interact with non-disabled persons are available in this model. Program staff must select work environments and work schedules which lend opportunities for social integration and potential upward mobility and security in jobs.

Enclave Model An enclave is a cluster of individuals with disabilities who are being trained and supervised among non-handicapped workers in an industry or business setting. The model provides a "useful alternative to both competitive employment and traditional sheltered employment. It maintains many of the benefits of integrated employment while providing the continuous, ongoing support required by some individuals for long-term job success" (Mank, Rhodes, & Bellamy, 1986, p. 143). However, this model becomes less desirable as the tendency to segregate the cluster of workers within the work site increases. This limits the opportunities for the workers with severe disabilities to interact with non-disabled people on the job and creates an unnatural grouping of people who can be easily stereotyped and shunned by co-workers.

Benchwork Model The benchwork model operates as a small, single-purpose, not-for-profit corporation. The structure of the activities allows for intensive training and support to employees with severe disabilities. This model, as originally conceived, shares many features and constraints with traditional sheltered workshops. For this reason, it has become the least desirable model. However, the work is characterized as being more meaningful, and requires more technical skills and equipment. Issues regarding integration into the larger community may be addressed both in program design and individual services.

[NB: The mobile crews, enclaves, and benchwork assembly models presented may represent a meaningful departure from previous models, however, "these employment approaches remain closely related to the traditional sheltered model" (Taylor, Racino, Knoll, & Lutfiyya, 1987, p. 39). Within these models there may be little opportunity to promote integration. The tendency to "backslide" into a sheltered approach may overshadow the potential for advances from previous models.]

Future Directions: Policy Recommendations that Promote a Major Statewide Transition Initiative

Schools are expected to pursue a multitude of goals. Using a variety of educationally accepted strategies, many schools meet many of the goals their communities set for them. When schools do not prioritize the goal of preparing young adults who have severe disabilities for meaningful employment, the results can be measured in terms of costly and unnecessary adult dependency on publicly-funded services. This problem of long-term dependency is gaining in economic significance, especially in light of the nation's increasing investment in providing educational services to young adults with disabilities. The growing public investment in special education means that there is a greater public stake in the return on that investment. Educational programs which lead to continued dependency on public support in adult years are increasingly difficult to justify, especially as a growing number of pilot and model programs demonstrate that many of these young people are capable of becoming productive members of the work force and of living more independently in the community.

New Hampshire is a state which places a high value on independence. Communities cherish the operating principle of home rule as the guiding force behind the delivery of education. The preference for local funding, local administration, and local values are all part of a longstanding tradition in New Hampshire (CRM, Inc., 1987). Evidence of strong local funding can be found in the fact that 88% of the education dollar emanates from local taxes (NH School Board Association, 1987).

One consequence of this strong local influence on educational programs and services is the variety of programming found at the district level. This has produced a wide spectrum of alternatives at all levels of education. It is not unusual to find exemplary district programs next to districts that minimally comply with the state standards for special education. Highly decentralized educational systems have the potential for wide variations in programs and services for young people with severe disabilities at the local level, and in their response to changing program needs.

The degree to which local schools respond to this change will be determined by their ability to reconceptualize the programming and service delivery offered to students with severe disabilities. In the midst of controversy surrounding new directions authorized by the current amendments to special education legislation (P.L. 99-457) has been a scarcity of information on how best to comply with directives that compel the strengthening and coordination of special education and related services. There is widespread belief that stimulating the improvement and development of secondary special education makes good sense. However, on a practical level, there have been few local demonstration models (Sec. 306, P.L. 99-457, Oct. 8, 1986).

Only recently has New Hampshire had the benefit of statewide initiatives that stress the concept of school to work transition in local public schools. In 1985, under the auspices of the New Hampshire Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) and the New Hampshire Job Training Council (JTC), four model demonstration projects were established to initiate the planning and implementation of secondary special education programs that include a strong employment-oriented curriculum. The grassroots achievements of these four projects offer useful examples for other local districts concerned with the quality of local programming and post-school employment and independent living outcomes. Through a variety of strategies, local projects in different regions of the state managed to overcome traditional barriers and establish high school programs that enhance vocational training and provide actual employment experiences to students identified by the schools as having severe disabilities.

All four demonstration projects achieved a level of consensus in their definition of success. Success for these projects was measured by several key indicators: (1) commitment by local districts of financial support after the initial period of state "seed money"; (2) the enhanced ability to provide local programming for students who would have been sent out-of-district (usually with a hefty price tag); (3) finding and placing students with handicaps in competitive community jobs; (4) re-evaluating the direction of traditional special education curricula; (5) decreasing the disproportionately high dropout rate among students with disabilities; (6) providing students with tangible work histories and associated skill training; and (7) increasing the involvement of outside adult service agencies in the planning and implementation phase of students' school programming.

Many valuable lessons have been learned from these four demonstration projects, and from other noteworthy efforts nationwide. State agencies and local schools responsible for administering the mandates of the law are now at a crossroads. If significant progress is going to be made in addressing effective school outcomes for students with severe disabilities, several changes will be necessary at the state and local level. These changes include:

(1) Implementation of curricula more relevant to adult life in the community and to individual transition planning. The opportunity currently exists to dramatically influence the post-school experiences of young people by revising and adapting local curricula. When an effective curriculum is in place, it needs to be reviewed and updated periodically to meet the changing needs of students and to incorporate findings emerging from the literature and best practices (CRM, 1986).

Students with severe disabilities require a range of programs to benefit from opportunities that include community, vocational, recreation/leisure, and domestic experiences. In all instances, these experiences are enhanced by their placement in local community environments, alongside their non-disabled peers (Brown et al., 1981; CRM, 1986).

Educational program planners, particularly vocational educators and special educators, must make clear commitments to place and maintain students with severe disabilities in educational opportunities which lead to competitive employment when their school programs end. Not only is this good programming, but it makes sound economic sense for the society at large.

Transition planning must be an integral part of the student's annual IEP, with special provisions for extending the scope of programming and services to include an ultimate goal, such as competitive employment. Systematic planning increases the likelihood that students will gain access to the most beneficial programs and services.

(2) Make available a wider variety of vocational options that utilize community-based training and follow-up. The variety and quality of high school vocational training can make a significant difference in how early in adulthood a person with severe disabilities will be able to work for competitive wages (Rusch, 1986; Wehman, Renzaglia & Bates 1985). Besides the issue of access, much depends on the community orientation of that training option. There exists sufficient educational and behavioral technology to enable persons with severe disabilities to be successfully employed. If high schools stress community-based work training, many future graduates could be prepared to take jobs right after graduation.

Secondary vocational planning is the missing link in the current process. Vocational directors can play a crucial role in developing innovative opportunities at the local level. On an annual basis, vocational directors must submit their applications for funds, detailing their agreement to provide various services using federal and matching dollars. Since a majority of existing vocational programs do not emphasize integrated community training experiences as a regular activity, it would be an innovative practice in New Hampshire to provide such experiences. Customarily, monies are used to support vocational resource rooms which tend

to "warehouse" young adults with mild to borderline handicapping conditions. Federal monies for supplemental staff, materials, adaptive equipment, and services could be requested to establish community training sites in integrated work settings. This use of local and federal funding (under the category of program improvement, expansion, and innovation- Title II, part B dollars) could be accomplished with advanced planning and technical assistance.

Vocational education and special education must make strong philosophical commitments to provide community-based opportunities for job training and placement into competitive employment as a part of regular programming. These disciplines must acknowledge that students who have severe disabilities, when confined to segregated educational facilities, cannot acquire the social and interpersonal skills required for success in competitive employment settings.

(3) Encourage local school districts and adult service agencies to refine the roles and responisiblities of key personnel working with students with severe disabilities. Implicit in the discussion of transition is the need for professional role changes (Knowlton & Clark, 1987). The implementation of new curricula and the introduction of new technologies necessitate the re-examination of roles and responsibilities of key personnel. Increasingly, the trend toward improved programming will require specialty concentrations in secondary special education and rehabilitation, emphasizing areas such as transition planning, job development, and job coaching (Hasazi, 1987).

(4) Introduce strategies that address the issue of resource reallocation for increased program effectiveness. To accomplish the goals of cooperative planning, relevant curriculum, and community-based training will require a re-examination of current priorities. While new funds may be required initially, it is essential to note that basic resource reallocations may be all that is necessary for future endeavors. Currently, there are discretionary and federal monies available through both special education and vocational education that include opportunities for schools to reconceptualize their programming and plan for innovative alternatives and replacement approaches in programming for students with severe disabilities.

(5) Encourage cooperative planning and collaboration between schools, adult service agencies, and parents in the formulation of employment and independent living plans for individuals with severe disabilities. Education agencies must establish relationships with community agencies, employers, parents, and other resources which can assist them to develop creative staffing and funding strategies, transition program designs, and productive parent relationships. "In the immediate future," according to McDonnell and colleagues (1986), "service planners, parents, and students with severe disabilities will face a significant shortage of vocational and residential service programs" (p. 60). These predicted shortages will impact significantly on the ability of individuals to access the benefits of the community, in both employment and independent living. Cooperative planning and interagency working agreements will enhance the chances for integration and full utilization of limited resources.

Interagency agreements are only the first in a series of steps that serve to optimize coordination and enhance the transfer of meaningful information on students as they exit school, move into the community, and interact with adult service agencies. In addition to formal agreements there has been, in the last decade, a proliferation of individually-designed plans established to identify the program and service needs of individuals at the school and agency levels. Unfortunately, the lack of coordinated service planning between educational and community service agencies has contributed to the general confusion and shortage of appropriate service alternatives (Hardman & McDonnell, 1987). The individual's IEP, IWRP, and ISP could be enhanced by joint cooperation among schools and agencies entrusted with their development. At the very least, key planning groups could agree to jointly design a more comprehensive form and synchronize their services and timetables to minimize confusion, overlap of effort, and conflict.

Families must be made aware of the importance of their role in enhancing the school to work

transition of their children. Parents, advocates, and friends form a vitally important social network that is an instrumental aspect of education, transition to employment, and continuing employment. The parental role must include stressing the significance of education and training. It must also include working cooperatively with teachers and adult service providers to develop supportive learning environments and to assure the continuity of services once school ends. In addition, parents and other community members must hold their schools accountable by participating in school board elections and school meetings and by making their views known to the responsible authorities (National Collaboration for Youth, 1984).

(6) Encourage business and industry to promote educational programs that will contribute to a high-quality labor force which includes individuals with severe disabilities. Employers should actively monitor schools for the employability training of students and provide political support for obtaining the funding and changes that are required to meet community employment demands. In addition, businesses are in a position to provide both personnel and technical expertise, such as engineering technology, to assist schools and agencies in addressing the complex training needs of individuals with severe disabilities. The private business sector can well provide work environments offering opportunities for social interaction, competitive wages, and fringe benefits for these young adults after they leave school.

(7) Increase the use of model demonstration programs at the local level using cooperative funding arrangements and federal and state discretionary dollars. Carefully targeted seed money to initiate innovations can make a difference in the long-term systems change in public schools. This type of funding represents not only a state commitment to excellence at the local district level, but also an endorsement of "best practices" and strategies for changing the direction of secondary-level special education and vocational education.

(8) Increase the technical assistance capacity of state agencies to help local schools and adult agencies to redirect their efforts toward individuals with severe disabilities. In order for professional and support staff in schools to keep abreast of developments in their field, state-level agencies must increase their technical assistance capabilities. In special education and vocational education, school programs must incorporate the new computer technologies that have recently become available, and must reflect the state-of-the-art research which enables persons with severe disabilities to become successfully employed in the regular economy. There are diverse and appropriate program models to assist persons with severe disabilities to adjust to employment in various employment settings. A coordinated technical assistance effort at the state level can facilitate the transfer of new information, avoid duplication of effort, and identify the regional service gaps.

(9) Revise and update university-level teacher training programs. Colleges and universities must initiate programs to develop effective post-secondary training strategies for those who teach individuals with severe disabilities and to assist local school districts in implementing and evaluating such strategies (Levin, 1986). Specifically, teachers, counselors, and professionals must be trained to provide direct transition-related services. Comprehensive programs of inservice and preservice training must address the needs of vocational and special educators to adequately execute relevant secondary level curricula for students with severe disabilities. This includes preparing specialists in the vocational training and job placement of students with severe disabilities. The new skills necessary for this effort require up-to-date training to perform: the job development; job analysis; job placement; job-site training; and follow-up activities.

(10) Collect data on the post-school employment, community integration, and adult service participation of individuals with severe disabilities. Whether a program actually is effective can be determined only through an examination of the results and outcomes achieved. Data collection for the purpose of evaluation and updating is essential for a systematic view of possible strengths and limitations of current and past programming efforts. Often, given the planning and instructional and organizational demands of teaching, evaluation frequently becomes of secondary importance to more immediate concerns. While data collection may entail a prolonged activity, it will reap rewards in the future by providing local districts with important post-school outcome information on such measures as student placements, employment options, additional training received, wages earned, and labor market status.

Considering the number of agencies and professionals expected to contribute to the process of transition, evaluation of the total effort is crucial. Local districts can enhance their program reviews by adding this important component to the regular program evaluation requirements of the state Department of Education, whose function is to monitor and assess local compliance with provisions of the state standards and federal mandates.

State and local research and evaluation efforts must be directed at assessing the qualitative aspects of local activities in support of transition. This information should be utilized in redesigning programs to maximize the match between employers, schools, adult service agencies, and the individual.

Conclusion

Recent approaches to transition have redefined traditional views on how special education, vocational education, and rehabilitation services operate. If all professionals in the process accept preparation for adult life as the ultimate goal of special education, then they must also be willing to accept changes in programming and the ~~vice~~ service delivery system (Everson & Moon, 1987). Efforts underway in several New Hampshire schools to initiate comprehensive transition planning will eventually lessen the disruptive influence of fragmented service delivery. Attempts at promoting transition are only as strong as the quality of service and program delivery, which are essentially issues of personnel preparation, ongoing professional development, and interagency cooperation.

Movement from predominately classroom-based to community-based training requires a redefinition of values and outcomes. "These changes in educational philosophy and service delivery," according to Everson and Moon (1987), "require teachers to accept new and creative roles in the local community" (p. 88). What was once held as sacred doctrine in special education has given way to the principle of normalization; first in the school setting, and now in the workplace. Such a transformation can lead to a greater sense of empowerment among those involved and make a profound difference in the lives of young people as they make their way in the community.

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Preparing for Transition:

- Helping Young People
- With Severe Disabilities
- To Prepare for Life

OFFICE FOR TRAINING AND EDUCATIONAL INNOVATIONS

- An Executive Summary of "Making a New Start: Redefining the Role of the School in Helping People with Severe Disabilities To Prepare for Life"
- A Project of the New Hampshire Developmental Disabilities Council and the New Hampshire Special Education Bureau

◆ Introduction

Young people in America are entitled to a free public education. However, that was not true until recently for children who had severe disabilities. It was only in 1975 that the United States Congress mandated, in the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, that all handicapped children, regardless of the severity of their disabilities, were as entitled to a free public education—appropriate to their needs—as were any other children.

The first children to start school under this new legislation are now teenagers. So it is not surprising that questions about the effectiveness and appropriateness of their educational programs are now being raised throughout the country. National experts, after taking a long, hard look at the educational experiences available to these young people, have concluded that most school programs are really not appropriate

"National experts, after taking a long, hard look at the educational experiences available to these young people, have concluded that most school programs are really not appropriate to their needs..."

to their needs—that they, in fact, need educational experiences quite different from what they are getting. The educational preparation for these young people must be structured more carefully to lead to meaningful adult outcomes and more directly to post-school life in the community.

A national consensus is emerging on the kind of education that would enable young people with severe disabilities to make the transition to adult life. In order to assist schools in New Hampshire to restructure their programs in accordance with this new national consensus, the New Hampshire Special Education Bureau has prepared a detailed description of the basic concepts and program approaches. These have been developed by federal policymakers through research investigations and by national demonstration projects in the course of redefining what constitutes a truly appropriate education for these individuals. The concepts and policy recommendations described in "Making a New Start: Redefining the Role of the School in Helping People with Severe Disabilities To Prepare for Life" are contained in this Executive Summary.

◆ Background

On September 24, 1986, Governor John Sununu established The Governor's Task Force on Disability and Employment, created through Executive Order 86-9. This Task Force was empowered to initiate joint state agency planning to reduce unnecessary dependency by persons with severe disabilities on publicly funded programs. In defining the Task Force's purpose, the Governor stated that "...persons with severe disabilities need and deserve the opportunity to be independent, integrated and productive society members."

Unfortunately, the opportunities envisioned by Governor Sununu are currently available only in rare instances. Recent surveys indicate that upon graduation or leaving school, most individuals with severe disabilities are unemployed or significantly underemployed; do not participate in community activities; and, most often, do not receive appropriate post-school training or support services.

The curriculum currently available at the high school level is usually designed for another purpose: to meet academic criteria for finishing school. Since the curriculum does not include goals related specifically, directly and energetically to successful employment or

"...persons with severe disabilities need and deserve the opportunity to be independent, integrated and productive society members."
Gov. John Sununu

other aspects of adult life within the community, it is hardly surprising that the New Hampshire State Advisory Committee on P.L. 94-142 (The Education of All Handicapped Children Act) concluded on November 10, 1986, that "...the majority of programs in public schools have failed to prepare handicapped

students for entry into the adult community upon their completion of their educational program."

Professor Barbara Wilcox, a leading national authority on transitional programs for young people with disabilities, described the core of the problem as a conceptual defect, in which people responsible for designing programs are constantly preparing people with disabilities for the next stage of some never-ending training process, rather than for the real world:

> "Despite the promise and progress of the last decade, thousands of adolescents and young adults with disabilities are trapped by the conventional wisdom of curriculum design in special education and human services. They are confined, not by physical barriers, but by widely shared assumptions about what they should learn and the order in which it should be presented. In effect, individuals with moderate and severe disabilities are trapped by a 'readiness' logic."

"...thousands of adolescents and young adults with disabilities are trapped by the conventional wisdom of curriculum design..."
Barbara Wilcox

Viewed in this light, the task of improving school programs that prepare young adults with disabilities is as much a problem of resource reallocation as of finding additional funds. While additional funds may well be necessary for demonstrating new and more successful program models, the more pressing need for most school systems may be to figure out how to spend more wisely funds already allocated. The key to future programming, said Madeleine Will, the Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in the U.S. Office of Education, is reallocation of funds from "inappropriate nonvocational services" to programs which provide real work opportunities and increase independent living skills.

◆ The Problem

In 1983, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights reported that between 50% and 80% of all persons with disabilities were unemployed. Of those who were working, approximately 75% were employed only part-time.

When schools fail to prepare young people with disabilities for meaningful employment, the failure results in long-term, costly and unnecessary dependence on publicly funded services. This problem has

"...people responsible for designing programs are constantly preparing people with disabilities for the next stage of some never-ending training process, rather than the real world."

gained economic significance in recent years, because the nation's total investment in providing educational services to students with disabilities has increased dramatically. The growing public investment in special education means that there is a greater public stake in the return on that investment. Educational programs which result in continuing dependency on increasingly costly adult public services become more difficult to justify. This is especially true in light of the growing number of model programs that demonstrate that these young people are capable of making meaningful contributions to the real world of work, and of living more independently.

Madeleine Will has pointed out that successful transitions to the adult world are also made more difficult by the limitations imposed by widely held perceptions about people with disabilities. The unjustifiably low expectations held by school personnel, parents, employers, rehabilitation professionals and the general public can constitute a barrier as formidable as shortages in appropriate school and community services.

Other problems of current school programs have been well documented. Most vocational programs are simply not available to students with severe disabilities. The few that are available are usually inappropriate. Recent "reform" efforts to promote "excellence" in the schools have generally bypassed or totally ignored special needs students. Students with severe disabilities are still by and large confined to segregated and isolated educational facilities. This occurs despite

growing evidence that such confinement makes less likely the development of the social and interpersonal skills needed for success in competitive employment and community settings. Vocational planning for post-school employment almost always begins too late—if ever—in the educational careers of students with disabilities.

◆ The New Consensus

Recent approaches to transition have redefined traditional views on how special education, vocational education and important post-school services should operate. The first step for professionals involved in the transition process is to support preparation for an adult life that includes real work and integrated community participation as key goals. They must be willing to accept changes in their own delivery systems. Assessments of how effectively they accomplish their own jobs must be undertaken, even if the conclusions point to changes in their job descriptions and working environments. Students must spend more time experiencing work in real settings as a part of their regular curriculum, and their teachers will have to go into the community with them.

Other important ingredients of successful transition programs include:

- the development of truly collaborative transition planning between public schools and community service agencies;
- recognition of the high school special education program as the base from which other relevant services must be integrated into the plan;
- the development of a "functional" high school curriculum reflecting skills required in actual employment situations and behaviors important to living in the community;
- integrated school and work settings to expose students to real-life expectations on the job and in the community, and to expose future employers and coworkers to the students' potential value as reliable employees; and
- opportunities for students and their families to develop relationships with a range of adult service providers while still in school.

"Students must spend more time experiencing work in real settings as a part of their regular curriculum, and their teachers will have to go into the community with them."

The process by which programs with such ingredients are planned can help secure the future success of students with severe disabilities. A formal individualized transition plan that describes in detail the mechanisms by which the student will reach future employment goals is recommended. The plan should be initiated from three to five years prior to graduation. It should involve parents, guardians and local human service agencies in the planning process.

The plan should specify:

- the competencies to be acquired by the student;
- the transition services the student will receive both before and after graduation or other school departure;
- annual goals reflecting skills required for successful functioning on the job, at home and in the community; and
- the names of the individuals responsible for initiating and following through on each activity.

The basic goal of transition is the creation of smooth pathways to full community life. Every effort must be made to avoid the interruption of needed services or the possibility of regressive, segregated post-school experiences through advanced planning

"...reallocation of funds from inappropriate nonvocational services to programs which provide real work opportunities and independent living skills are a key to future programming."
Madeleine Will

while the student is still in secondary school. As the National Association of State Directors of Special Education has pointed out, signing interagency agreements alone is not sufficient to ensure the necessary levels of local coordination. A clear management structure, resources and encouragement to collaborate, and sanctions to make such agreements stick, are also needed.

◆ Conclusion

Researchers and rehabilitation specialists are increasingly certain that the behavioral and educational methods now exist to enable persons with severe disabilities to be successfully employed. If high schools stress community-based work training, and utilize newly developed technological approaches that enable people with disabilities to learn and do things they have not done before, future graduates can be prepared to take jobs right after high school.

Experts predict that, in the future, public schools will be held accountable for providing a functional education for substantially handicapped students, and teacher training will be geared more toward managing individualized functional skill development. The jobs of other professionals involved in the lives of these people may also need to be dramatically altered to fit the new goals. Dr. Paul Wehman, a pioneer in transition programming, concluded that professionals, such as rehabilitation counselors and vocational educators, will need to dramatically alter their current job roles and play a more active part in job placement activity. Colleges and universities will need to initiate new programs to train personnel who can be effective in delivering transition-specific services.

Movement from predominantly classroom-based to community-based training also requires teachers to accept new and creative roles in the local community. Accepted wisdom in special education was once to separate students with disabilities and prepare them for the long trek up the readiness ladder. This has given way, first in the school setting, and now in the workplace, to the principle of normalization, in which everyone learns from experiences in typical settings. Such a transformation can make a profound difference in the lives of young people as they learn to make their way in the communities in which they live.

"...rehabilitation counselors and vocational educators will need to dramatically alter their current job roles and play a more active part in job placement activity."
Paul Wehman

What Makes a Secondary Educational Program Effective?

The following questions suggest a way of taking a fresh look at secondary programs for young people with severe disabilities. They reflect the findings of some of the most recent research and evaluation studies regarding what makes a program effective.

1. Is the program providing students with experiences that have a proven ability to make future employment in currently available jobs in the community more likely?
2. Does the program avoid a focus on meeting academic criteria established for school completion at the expense of meeting goals related to employment and other aspects of adult life after leaving school?
3. Is the curriculum "functional" in the sense that it develops (a) skills required in actual local employment situations, and (b) behaviors important to successful participation in the community?
4. Does the student's program combine in-school instruction and experience in work settings in a coherent way?
5. Will the program provide the student with a tangible work history?
6. Does the educational program offer community-based instruction that provides the student with opportunities to practice targeted skills in natural job environments such as hospitals, restuarants and offices?
7. Does the student have a formal, individualized transition plan, reflecting input from parents or guardians?
8. Is the student's secondary program the result of cooperative transition planning between community service agencies and the local public school?
9. Does the program reflect an increased involvement of outside adult service agencies in both the planning and implementation of the student's school programming, especially during the years when graduation is approaching?
10. Does the program enable students and their parents to develop relationships with a range of adult service providers while still in high school?
11. Was transitional planning begun at least three years prior to anticipated school completion?
12. Is transitional planning an integral part of the student's annual Individualized Educational Plan?
13. Does the program make use of the high technology resources that have proved effective in developing job-related skills in young people with severe disabilities over the past few years?
14. Does the program take place in a non-segregated setting where students can begin to acquire the social and interpersonal skills required for success in competitive employment settings?
15. Does the student's program utilize existing funds in new and creative ways?

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